INF 385N Informatics: Credibility on the Web

Fall 2008
Sanchez Building 464 (room change)
Monday 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Instructor: Professor Lecia Barker
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Office: Sanchez 457
Office Hours: Monday afternoons; Thursday or Friday afternoons by appointment (send email)

Rationale

What information is contained in visual and textual discourse beyond the meaning of the words or images themselves? How does social context affect interpretation and meaning? This course presents students with theory and methods to interpret the use language and images as resources for persuasion, claiming belonging to social groups, and intentionally or unintentionally communicating the values of a group. This course will be useful to students wishing to make explicit the meanings of visual and textual information and interaction; the expertise acquired should be useful in writing a thesis or dissertation, or simply applied to everyday situations.

Course Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To provide students with the opportunity to acquire a set of “tools” for interpreting meaning and function from texts, both verbal (written/oral) and nonverbal (paraverbal, design elements, images).
- To allow students to explore topics of personal interest using these “tools”

Specific Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply theoretical perspectives to the interpretation of texts.
- Use various methods to develop alternative understandings and explanations of information communicated verbally or nonverbally.
- Justify the choice of a particular explanation based on knowledge and understanding of relevant social contexts.

Format and Procedures

Class will be taught interactively through discussion and exploration of theory and methods upon web sites, often chosen by students and based on their interests. It is hoped that students will fully participate in class processes by engaging in the exchange of ideas and in collaborative learning.
Course Requirements

Grading will be based on the following:

- Participation in class (35%)
  - Discussing key concepts by bringing in questions and engaging in exchanges with professor and other students
  - Exploring analysis of texts in class
  - Collaboratively learning with other students
- Weekly assignments (30%)
  - Demonstrating engagement with course readings through summaries, construction of good questions, and application to texts (as shared in class)
- Two short papers (35%)
  - Application of interpretive methods to topics of interest to student
  - Written/developed in collaboration with other students;

Tentative Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 8 Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 15 Overview of Analysis</td>
<td>Content Analysis of Visual Images (Bell); Chapters 1-3 of An Introduction to Discourse Analysis (Gee); Terministic Screens (Burke)</td>
<td>Written: Summarize each article Prepare to apply central concepts of each article to web page of your choice to be analyzed in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 22 Visual Analysis</td>
<td>Reading the Visual (Chandler online modules); Visual Meaning (Jewitt &amp; Oyama); Safe visual rhetoric (Sullivan)</td>
<td>Written: Summarize each article, generate question Bring images of interest (can be web sites) to analyze</td>
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<td>September 29 Discourse of Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>Chapters 4-5 of An Introduction to Discourse Analysis (Gee); Race and public spheres (Byrne); Online persuasion (Fogg and Iizawa)</td>
<td>Written: Summarize each article, generate question Bring Facebook or other social networking examples to analyze</td>
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*Sept 30-Oct 4 Lecia is out of town at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, but available by email intermittently*

<p>| October 6 Rhetoric of Climate Change Information | Guest speaker: Dr. Susan Buhr, University of Colorado; Global Warming 7 (KGL - online); Landscaping climate change (Rogers &amp; Marres) | Written: Summarize each article, generate question Bring climate change sites to analyze |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 20</td>
<td>Chapters 6-7 of An Introduction to Discourse Analysis (Gee) <em>(important reading)</em></td>
<td>First paper due</td>
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<td>A week off of written summary, but ← be prepared to discuss</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Online Persuasion</td>
<td>Persuasive technology (Tørning); Fostering Trust (Oravec); Seeing beyond belief (Lister &amp; Wells)</td>
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<td>November 3</td>
<td>Establishing Credibility Online</td>
<td>Corporate ethics (Pollach); Elements of credibility (Flanagan &amp; Metzger); Critical DA (van Dijk)</td>
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<td>November 10</td>
<td>Advertising, Film</td>
<td>Meaning in Print Ads (Cheong); Multimodal Concordancer (Baldry); Film semiosis (O’Halloran)</td>
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<td>November 17</td>
<td>Info Literacy and Libraries</td>
<td>Technoliteracy (Kahn &amp; Kellner); Embedded values (Fleischmann)</td>
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<td>November 24</td>
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<td>December 1</td>
<td>Debrief or breakfast or something</td>
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**Student Presentations**

Student presentations are intended to be informal presentations of a first draft of a short paper. Students will present their main points, analytical method and theory, and evidence/reasons in groups of two to three. Students in the “audience” will ask questions and provide constructive criticism for revising the draft and writing the report.

**Reading List**


**Academic Integrity**

This course will depend on collaborative learning, shown in decades of research to increase student learning and feeling of belonging to an academic community. It is assumed that students will produce original work in collaboration and not submit someone else’s work as if it were their own. It is also assumed that students are taking this course because they want to work at learning and not only because they want a grade.

Here is the University of Texas’ Statement on Academic Integrity:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e mail, an e mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See website below for more information:

[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php)

**University Electronic Mail Notification Policy: Check your Email**

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at [http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html](http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html).
This Course Uses Blackboard

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening. Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys. You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date. Blackboard is available at http://courses.utexas.edu. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.